

The authorship of Colossians has been debated by scholars as to whether the writer was Paul or one of his disciples that wrote with the approval of Paul under his name. It was estimated by some of Paul's students that this letter was written around AD 60 before an earthquake devastated Colossae. According to David Garland, author of *The NIV Colossians/Philemon Application Commentary* little is known about Paul's childhood, however it was reported that he "suffered with a thorn in his flesh," and had an unshakable insight into reality. His focus after his conversion was to lead others to the truth and the discovery of what his God given purpose was, how God worked, and his revision of Christianity. Thereby, he became a servant of the gospel not wanting to take any recognition for himself. He clearly informed the Colossians that his authority to speak to them was the result of him being a servant of the gospel that they had heard preached, his daily praying for them, and how he labored for their sake to present the word of God to them. Because they needed to be reminded of their faith and their hope to continue to establish and deepen their maturity in Christ, Paul wrote this letter.

In his customary way Paul addresses himself as an apostle of Jesus Christ by God's will. He did not find or personally visit the church at Colossae, but his responsibility was to help build the church spiritually. Paul did not send this letter in his name only, but he included Timothy "our brother" as a cosender, but was not considered as an apostle but did the same work as Paul for the advancement of the gospel. Paul's traditional greeting "grace" (Greek Charis) and "peace" was a standard Jewish greeting. As an apostle, Paul was not bound to any one congregation but was obligated to all, especially the Gentiles. Paul was happy to let them know that thanksgiving and prayer was offered to God for them because of the faith in Jesus Christ that they possessed, and the love for the saints. According to Garland, the section in Colossians on thanksgiving covers from 1:3 through 1:23 and includes the Christological prose hymn in 1:15-

20. The opening ideas of faith, hope and hearing are repeated to form an inclusion, which is a device that the beginning of a unit is repeated in the end. There are two parts for thanksgiving with the first part focusing on the effects of the gospel in Colosse and the world, and the next part is on Paul's intercession for the Colossians and the celebration of their salvation. It is their faith that causes Paul to celebrate them. There are three reasons listed in 1:12-14 why Paul gives thanks, however, some question if it is part of the prayer and treat it as an introit leading to Christ in 1:15-20. Paul ensured the believers that the gospel was bearing fruit throughout the world the same way it had been doing since the day that they heard of the grace of God. He knew that the gospel had gone beyond geographical boundaries and racial barriers. God's grace was extended to all through his love and the sacrifice of Jesus's death so man would be redeemed from sin. Paul also prayed that they would continue to bear fruit and grow in the knowledge of God, and that they would be strengthened in power and might. When the gospel is shared with others, and it is understood and received, that is the result of successful fruit bearing. Paul knew and understood that others were also able to share and preach the gospel especially in places that he was not able to go. In addition, he asked that God would continue to give them wisdom and understanding by the Spirit so that their life would be pleasing to God. Paul wanted the church to share the knowledge of God to all through their daily conduct. That is living a life that is worthy of the Lord and that will please Him in every way according to Garland.

Giving joyful thanks for what God had done was the reason Paul expressed it in the aorist tense, saying that he was qualified to share the inheritance by God, or qualified to preach the gospel which Paul felt that he was not fit to do. Paul acknowledged that God had brought him out of darkness and brought him into the knowledge and light of Jesus Christ. Paul was eager to share the redemptive power of Jesus to forgive sin.